63D CONGRESS, 2d Session. } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. { DOCUMENT No. 688.

CHOCTAWHATCHEE RIVER, FLA. AND ALA.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING,

WITH A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, REPORT ON PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF CHOCTAWHATCHEE RIVER, FLA. AND ALA., UP TO GENEVA, ALA.

FEBRUARY 2, 1914.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered to be printed, with illustration.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 31, 1914.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a letter from the Acting Chief of Engineers, United States Army, dated 30th instant, together with copy of report from Maj. Earl I. Brown, Corps of Engineers, dated November 21, 1913, with map, on preliminary examination of Choctawhatchee River, Fla. and Ala., made by him in compliance with the provisions of the river and harbor act approved July 25, 1912.

Very respectfully,

LINDLEY M. GARRISON,
Secretary of War.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
Washington, January 30, 1914.

From: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army.
To: The Secretary of War.
Subject: Preliminary examination of Choctawhatchee River, Fla. and Ala.

1. There is submitted herewith for transmission to Congress report dated November 21, 1913, with map, by Maj. Earl I. Brown, Corps of Engineers, on preliminary examination of Choctawhatchee River, Fla. and Ala., up to Geneva, Ala., called for by the river and harbor act approved July 25, 1912.

2. The Choctawhatchee River rises in the southeastern portion of Alabama and empties into Choctawhatchee Bay on the Gulf coast of Florida. The present project provides for securing a low water navigable channel from the mouth to Newton, a distance of 162 miles, by removing logs, snags, and overhanging trees, by excavating rock and marl shoals, and by contraction work and shore protection, and for improvement of Cypress Top Outlet. The district officer states that in late years operations have not been in progress above the mouth of Holmes River on account of lack of commerce, and that portion is not in condition for commerce. The improvement apparently desired is the restoration of the channel below Geneva in order to permit the establishment of a boat line to Pensacola. This work is within the scope of the existing project, which is continuing in nature, and the district officer therefore reports that the river is not worthy of improvement to a greater extent than is authorized by the present project. The division engineer concurs in this opinion.

3. This report has been referred, as required by law, to the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and attention is invited to its report herewith, dated December 30, 1913, concurring with the views of the district officer and the division engineer.

4. After due consideration of the above-mentioned reports I concur with the views of the district officer, the division engineer, and the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and therefore report that the improvement by the United States of Choctawhatchee River, Fla. and Ala., up to Geneva, Ala., is not deemed advisable to a greater extent than is authorized by the existing project.

EDW. BURR,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Acting Chief of Engineers.

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS.

[Third indorsement.]

BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS,
December 30, 1913.

To the Chief of Engineers, United States Army.

1. The Choctawhatchee River empties into the bay of that name on the Gulf coast of northwest Florida. It is navigable to Newton, Ala., a distance of 162 miles. The present investigation covers the reach up to Geneva, Ala., a distance of 96 miles.

2. The stream has been improved under a project which contemplates the creation of a low-water navigable channel up to Newton by the removal of logs, snags, overhanging trees, by excavating rock and marl shoals, and by contraction work and shore protection, and the maintenance of the improved channel. The original work required has been completed, and the work remaining to be done is maintenance.

3. On account of the lack of commerce on the river in recent years, the work of maintenance has been prosecuted only below the mouth of the Holmes River, a distance of about 33 miles. It appears, however, that there is an intention on the part of the merchants of Geneva to make use of the river if it is again placed in navigable

condition. If this is done to the extent authorized under the existing project, it appears to be all the work that is necessary, and therefore the district officer reports that the river is not worthy of improvement beyond that authorized by the existing project, and in this view the division engineer concurs.

4. Interested parties were advised of the unfavorable tenor of the district officer's report and given an opportunity of submitting their views to the board, but no communications on the subject have been received.

5. The existing project provides for such improvement and maintenance as may be necessary to afford a navigable channel as far up as Newton, which includes the section now under consideration. Such work will make available the natural depth, which is all that can be obtained without incurring prohibitive expense. It appears that the improvement now desired for the revival of navigation will be accomplished by the maintenance of the existing project, which does not require special legislation. It is noted in the report of the Chief of Engineers for 1913 that there is an available balance on hand, applicable for the work desired, of $8,837.35, and that an estimate of $25,000 in addition is included for the ensuing year. The board concurs with the district officer and the division engineer in the opinion that it is not advisable for the United States to undertake improvement of Choctawhatchee River, Fla. and Ala., beyond the work that is authorized by the existing project.

6. In compliance with law, the board reports that there are no questions of terminal facilities, water power, or other related subjects which could be coordinated with the suggested improvement in such manner as to render the work advisable in the interests of commerce and navigation.

For the board:

FREDERIC V. ABBOT,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Senior Member Present.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF CHOCTAWHATCHEE RIVER, FLA. AND ALA.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Montgomery, Ala., November 21, 1913.

From: The District Engineer Officer.
To: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army
(Through the Division Engineer).
Subject: Preliminary examination of Choctawhatchee River, Fla. and Ala.

1. The following report upon a preliminary examination of the Choctawhatchee River is made pursuant to the requirements of the river and harbor act of July 25, 1912.

2. The Choctawhatchee River rises in the southeastern portion of Alabama and flows southerly into Florida, thence continuing southerly and southwesterly courses until it empties into Choctawhatchee Bay on the Gulf coast of Florida. It has a drainage area of about 471 square miles in Alabama and 234 square miles in Florida.

3. It is navigable from its mouth to Newton, Ala., a distance of 162 miles. Its principal tributaries are Clay Bank Creek, which enters about midway between Newton and Geneva, Ala.; Double Bridge Creek and Pea River, which enter it at Geneva; and Holmes River, which enters it in Florida 33 miles above its mouth. The low-water discharge is unknown, but below the mouth of Pea River is probably not less than 400 cubic feet per second.

4. The upper part of the river between Newton and Geneva was originally obstructed by several marl reefs below Geneva, but few of these are now found. Several limestone reefs cross the river, but these have caused but little obstruction. The fall from Geneva to the Gulf is about 60 feet.

5. Previous examination reports on this stream may be found in the Annual Reports of the Chief of Engineers for 1872, pages 588 and 640; 1880, page 1081; 1889, page 1423; and in House Document 876, Sixtieth Congress, first session.

6. The stream is now under improvement under a project originally adopted in 1874, but which has since been amended so that the present project contemplates the creation of a low-water navigable channel throughout from its mouth to Newton by removing logs, snags, and overhanging trees, by excavating rock and marl shoals, and by contraction work and shore protection, at an estimated cost of $112,832, for maintenance of the above and for the improvement and maintenance of one of its outlets known as Cypress Top Outlet. The work of improvement has been completed and the only work now contemplated under the project is maintenance.

7. Of late years maintenance above the mouth of Holmes River has been neglected on account of lack of commerce, so that now that portion is not in condition for commerce.

8. An investigation has developed the fact that there is now a desire on the part of merchants and others at Geneva and vicinity to put boats in operation on that portion of the river below Geneva, as freight rates have become burdensome on the railroad, and it is desired to provide water transportation in competition therewith.

9. There is also a section of Florida between Geneva and Caryville, which is said to be developing quite rapidly, and is a portion of the country which receives supplies from Geneva, and this section is demanding freight service by boat. Before the construction of the railroad to Geneva, it is said that there was enough business on the river to support well three boats, which then operated, but when the railroad was completed, the freight was all diverted to that line, and the boats put out of business. The rates by rail was then raised until they became oppressive, so that relief was sought by reestablishing boat service in 1907, which resulted in a prompt reduction in freight rates by rail.

The merchants again deserted the boat line for rail shipments, consequently the boat line failed and went out of business, and rail rates promptly went up again higher than before.

10. The merchants have now learned that they must keep their water transportation alive if they expect to reap any benefit from it; they have, therefore, nearly all signed a written agreement to the effect that if the river be again put in navigable condition and a boat line be established to Pensacola, they will support the boat line in spite of reductions in rail rates.

11. The following is an estimate of business done in Geneva last year:

		Amount.	Value.
Grain, hardware, dry goods, groceries, shoes, etc.	tons	6,500	$260,000
Cotton	bales	6,000	300,000
Cottonseed	tons	1,500	15,000
Lumber	do	37,500	65,000
Naval stores	do	2,600	10,400
Fertilizer	do	3,500	35,000
Total value			685,400

12. Between Geneva and Caryville, it is estimated that the following would be handled by the boat:

		Amount.	Value.
Naval stores	tons	4,000	$8,000
Fertilizer	do	1,500	15,000
Cotton	bales	2,000	100,000
Cottonseed	tons	700	7,000
General merchandise	do	2,000	100,000
Total value			230,000

13. It is reported that when the river was in an improved condition, formerly there was a navigable depth of 3 feet practically all the year round, and that the natural depth was sufficient for all purposes except a few points where some rock excavation and jettying were required.

14. It appears, therefore, that if the river were restored to its former condition, which can be done under the present project, that the needs of commerce can be met thereby and therefore no extension of the project will be needed. I have to report that the river is not now worthy of any extension of the present project.

15. There are no wharves nor terminal facilities on the stream. It is understood that suitable storehouses will be provided when a boat line is established.

16. There are no questions of flood control, waterpower development, or other related subjects to be considered in connection with the improvement.

EARL I. BROWN,
Major, Corps of Engineers.

[First indorsement.]

OFFICE OF DIVISION ENGINEER,
GULF DIVISION,
Baltimore, Md., December 1, 1913.

To the CHIEF OF ENGINEERS:

1. Forwarded, concurring in the opinion of the district officer that the Choctawhatchie River is not worthy of improvement beyond that contemplated by the existing project, which appears to be to maintain a navigable channel from the mouth to Newton, Ala., by such open channel work as may be necessary.

2. It is believed that under existing commercial conditions an appropriation for the improvement of the stream from the mouth to Geneva, Ala., could be advantageously made.

LANSING H. BEACH,
Colonel, Corps Engineers,
Division Engineer.

[For report of the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, see page 2.]

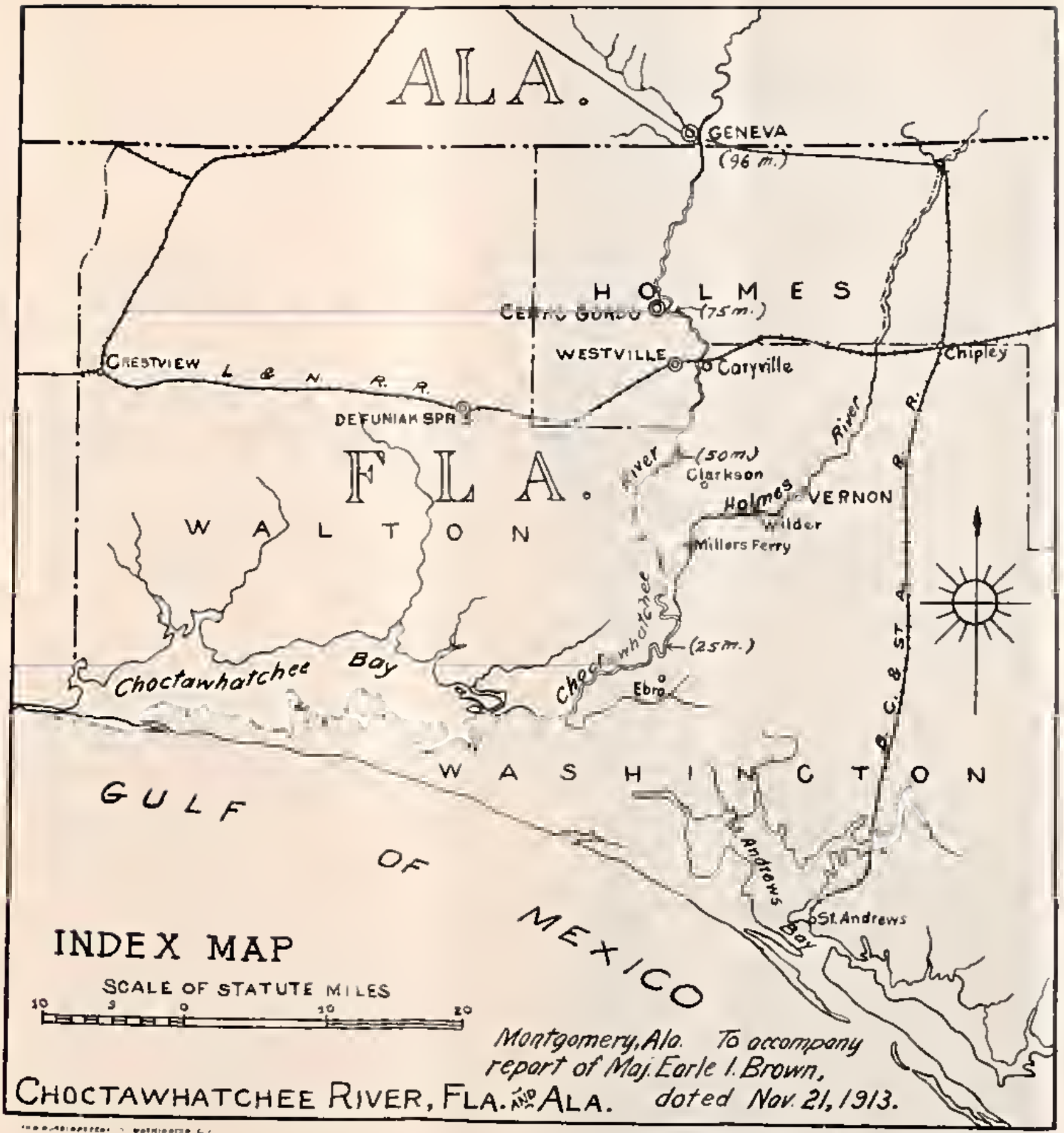
COMMERCIAL STATISTICS.

Vessel classification.

Class.	Number.	Net registered tonnage.	Passengers.
AMERICAN.			
Registered:			
Steamers	2	155	300
Schooners	1	20	.....
Tugs	1	62	.....
Unregistered:			
Barges	4	280	.....
Total	8	517	300

Freight traffic.

Articles.	Amount in customary units.	Amount in short tons.	Valuation.	Average haul or distance freight was carried.	Rate per ton-mile.
				Miles.	
UPSTREAM.					
Brick	110,000	275	$1,100	117	0.0215
Cotton seed	500 sacks	39	970	135	.0225
Fertilizer	4,900 sacks	245	5,905	108	.0216
Fruit	175 crates	8	1,132	115	.025
Grain	13,500 sacks	630	20,790	108	.025
Hay and feed	6,880 bales	330	8,910	108	.0216
Live stock	10 head	5	250	90	.11
Manufactured iron and steel	12,000 packages	3,000	36,000	90	.0225
Merchandise	1,540 tons	1,540	184,800	108	.0367
Miscellaneous	1,035 packages	169	33,840	108	.0367
Oil	13,000 gallons	50	1,450	108	.0367
Salt	530 sacks	27	270	108	.0216
Sugar	400 barrels	66	7,620	108	.0216
Total	.....	6,384	303,037	.....	.....
DOWNSTREAM.					
Cotton	200 bales	50	12,000	135	.0225
Cypress logs	2,863,245 feet	2,862	75,897	120	Rafted.
Cypress lumber	2,666,226 feet	2,660	106,649	90	Barged.
Miscellaneous	115 packages	19	3,760	108	.0267
Naval stores	48,300 barrels	13,090	734,300	118	.02
Pine logs	16,246,000 feet	28,435	324,920	135	Rafted.
Pine lumbe.r	4,807,443 feet	8,412	96,149	108	Barged.
Pine timber	3,579,600 feet	6,264	71,580	108	Rafted.
Wool	75 bales	8	4,000	100	.02
Total	.....	61,800	1,429,255	.....	.....
RECAPITULATION.					
Freight traffic:					
Upstream	.....	6,384	303,037	.....	.....
Downstream	.....	61,800	1,429,255	.....	.....
Total	.....	68,184	1,732,292	.....	.....



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2. It is believed th
appropriation for the
Geneva, Ala., could be

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Registered:	
Steamers	
Schooners	
Tugs	
Unregistered:	
Barges	
Total	

Articles.	
UPSTREAM.	
Brick	
Cotton seed	
Fertilizer	
Fruit	
Grain	
Hay and feed	
Live stock	
Manufactured iron and steel	
Merchandise	
Miscellaneous	
Oil	
Salt	
Sugar	
Total	
DOWNSTREAM.	
Cotton	
Cypress logs	
Cypress lumber	
Miscellaneous	
Naval stores	
Pine logs	
Pine lumbe.r	
Pine timber	
Wool	
Total	
RECAPITULATION.	
Freight traffic:	
Upstream	
Downstream	
Total	